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Washington Service Corps Celebrates 20 Years of Service

OLYMPIA – Twenty years ago, state lawmakers created the Washington Service Corps to provide young people with opportunities to serve their communities. Today, that vision has grown to become the nation's oldest publicly funded statewide service program.

Members of the Washington Service Corps, which marked its 20th anniversary on Aug. 23, are making a difference in communities statewide. Nearly 11,000 program participants have contributed more than 14 million hours of service to nonprofit organizations, schools, and local government programs.

"Washington Service Corps members are our nation's future leaders," said program Director Nancy Pringle. "Once you've served your community, it's impossible to not to see it in a new way and want to continue helping."

Administered by the state Employment Security Department, the corps assists private nonprofit organizations, schools and local government in addressing unmet community needs. At the same time, it provides young adults with meaningful service experiences.

Washington Service Corps is affiliated with AmeriCorps, a national service program that engages more than 50,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet critical needs in education, public safety, health, homeland security, and the environment.

Participants ages 17 and up receive a minimum stipend while serving full-time for 11 months. At the end of their projects, they receive a \$4,725 education award that can be used for college tuition or to pay back student loans.

Washington Service Corps members have their hands in a wide variety of projects, such as tutoring students, building homes for low-income families, developing education programs to help families transition from welfare to work, and rebuilding communities affected by national disasters.

Examples include members creating the Farmer's Market in Hoquiam, restoring a trolley route between Yakima and Selah that has become a tourist attraction, and building a walking trail in Centralia so that children could safely avoid a busy highway on their way to school.

Members empower communities by recruiting additional volunteers to assist with their projects.

For more information about the Washington Service Corps and local programs, call 1-888-713-6080 or visit <http://www.wa.gov/esd/wsc>.